

4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the existing visual setting, focusing on the visual character of the project site and views from surrounding public areas, and the potential for the project to affect those conditions. The analysis of the project's potential visual effects is based on field observations of the project site and surroundings in addition to review of the project's conceptual drawings and technical data, aerial and ground-level photographs of the project area, and public planning documents. Computer-generated visual simulations were prepared to assist in describing and evaluating the visual changes to the project site upon project completion.

In response to the Notice of Preparation for this Environmental Impact Report (EIR), several commenters expressed concern regarding the height of the proposed buildings, particularly the height of the proposed apartment buildings, in relation to the surrounding residential properties. Several commenters expressed concern regarding the proposed building setback from Kaiser Boulevard. Commenters also expressed concern regarding the overall aesthetics of the project and the project's ability to blend in with the existing neighborhood. All of these scoping comments are addressed in the impact assessment presented below.

4.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.1.2.1 Regional Visual Setting

The City of Santa Clara is located in Santa Clara Valley near the southwestern end of San Francisco Bay (see **Figure 3.0-1, Project Location**). The Santa Clara Valley is bounded on the west by the Santa Cruz Mountains and on the east by the Diablo Range. The City of Santa Clara is bordered by San Jose to the north, east and south, and Sunnyvale and Cupertino to the west.

Santa Clara is one of the largest cities in Santa Clara County, with a population of approximately 115,503 people (California Department of Finance 2008), and covering approximately 19.3 square miles. The City is essentially built out, and development predominates the visual setting of the land and surrounding the City. Residential and commercial uses are located primarily in the southern portion of the City, while industrial uses exist primarily in the northern portion of the City.

4.1.2.2 Project Site and Vicinity Visual Setting

Surrounding Land Uses

The project site is almost entirely developed with hospital buildings and a parking lot. As shown in **Figure 3.0-2, Aerial Photograph of Project Site**, the area surrounding the project site is fully developed and consists mainly of residential development. Residential developments exist to the north and west of the project site. Santa Clara High School is located further west beyond the residential development. Parcels 1 and 2 are bounded by Kaiser Drive to the north, Pepper Tree Lane to the west, Saratoga Creek and single-family homes to the south, and Kiely Boulevard to the east, as shown in **Figure 3.0-3, Proposed and Surrounding Land Uses**. Parcel 3 is bounded by condominiums to the north and west, Kaiser Drive to the south, and Kiely Boulevard to the east. Central Park is located on the east side of Kiely Boulevard. Other land uses within a 1-mile radius include a mix of single-family and multi-family housing developments, three churches, commercial development, the City's main library, and an international swimming complex.

Existing Visual Setting

The approximately 26-acre project site is currently developed with buildings, parking lots, and mature landscape. The site is visible from local roadways, including Kiely Boulevard, Kaiser Drive, Pepper Tree Lane, and partially visible from Marietta Drive. The main visual element on the project site is the seven-story hospital building that is approximately 75 feet in height from finished grade. Other visual elements on site include nine single-story buildings and four single-story mobile buildings.

The approximately 382,000 square-foot, seven-story main hospital building is the tallest building on the site, and is setback approximately 300 feet southwest from the Kiely Boulevard and Kaiser Drive intersection. The main hospital building is visible from the local roadways, including Kiely Boulevard, Kaiser Drive, and Pepper Tree Lane. The building has an exterior of concrete, decorative metal siding, and dark glass panels. The southern portion of the roof of the main hospital building has two sets of solar panels that are visible from Kiely Boulevard.

South of the main building are four single-story medical/administrative office buildings, ranging in size from approximately 6,000 square feet to 19,000 square feet. Exterior finishes on these buildings include stucco, white-painted-wood siding and composition roof shingles. Three of these buildings are visible from Kiely Boulevard; the other is shielded from view by vegetation and partially by the main hospital building and the single-story buildings.

Northwest of the main hospital are two single-story mobile-office/administrative trailers near Kaiser Drive. One building is a trailer and the other is a single-story metal framed building. East of the main hospital is a single-story medical/administrative office building that encompasses approximately 1,000 square-feet. This building has an exterior finished with stucco and a built-up roof. These structures and mobile buildings are visible from Kaiser Drive, and the building east of the main hospital building is visible from Kiely Boulevard.

The remainder of the site consists of paved (asphalt) parking lots and associated lighting, internal roadways, and vegetation. Overhead wires run in a north-south direction near the center of the site. Mature stands of trees, including redwood species (*Sequoia* sp), Canary Island pine (*Pinus canariensis*), Chinese elms (*Ulmus parvifolia*), and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), are present on the site, mainly in the southern portion of the site and along the southern facade of the main hospital building. Four wood structures that were used as guard shacks are present in the parking lot west of the main hospital building. All four structures are less than 100 square feet.

Three similar one-story buildings that are approximately 10,000 square feet are located north of Kaiser Drive on Parcel 3. The remainder of the parcel consists of paved (asphalt) parking lots and associated lighting and vegetation. The buildings on Parcel 3 are visible from Kaiser Drive, and the building closest to Kiely Boulevard would be visible from that roadway.

4.1.2.3 Public Views of the Project Site

Based on a visual reconnaissance of the project site, two primary types of public views were identified (1) those observed from the roadways that are adjacent to the project site and (2) views as seen from Central Park. In order to document the existing visual character of the project site and its surroundings, photographs were taken from locations where public views of the site are most attainable. **Figure 4.1-1, Key to Viewpoint Locations**, identifies the location of photograph viewpoints taken from public vantage points of the project area and its surroundings. These photographs show the various viewpoints described below.

Views from Central Park along Kiely Boulevard were selected due to the public use of the park and the vicinity of the park to the project site. A vantage point at Pepper Tree Lane and Kaiser Drive was selected to visually show the views from the Alderwood Apartments and local roadways. Lastly, a vantage point from Pepper Tree Lane was selected to consider the views of the project site from the residential neighborhood west of the site.

Existing View: Viewpoint 1 - facing Southwest from Central Park

As shown in **Figure 4.1-2, View 1: Existing Conditions**, the most predominant feature in the existing foreground is the mature vegetation. The mature vegetation consists mainly of evergreen trees, which stay green and keep their leaves throughout the year. A chain-link fence that runs along the perimeter of the site is also visible in the foreground. One of the medical buildings is visible in the midground of this view, but due to the height of the mature trees, the hospital building is barely visible through the trees in the background.

Existing View: Viewpoint 2

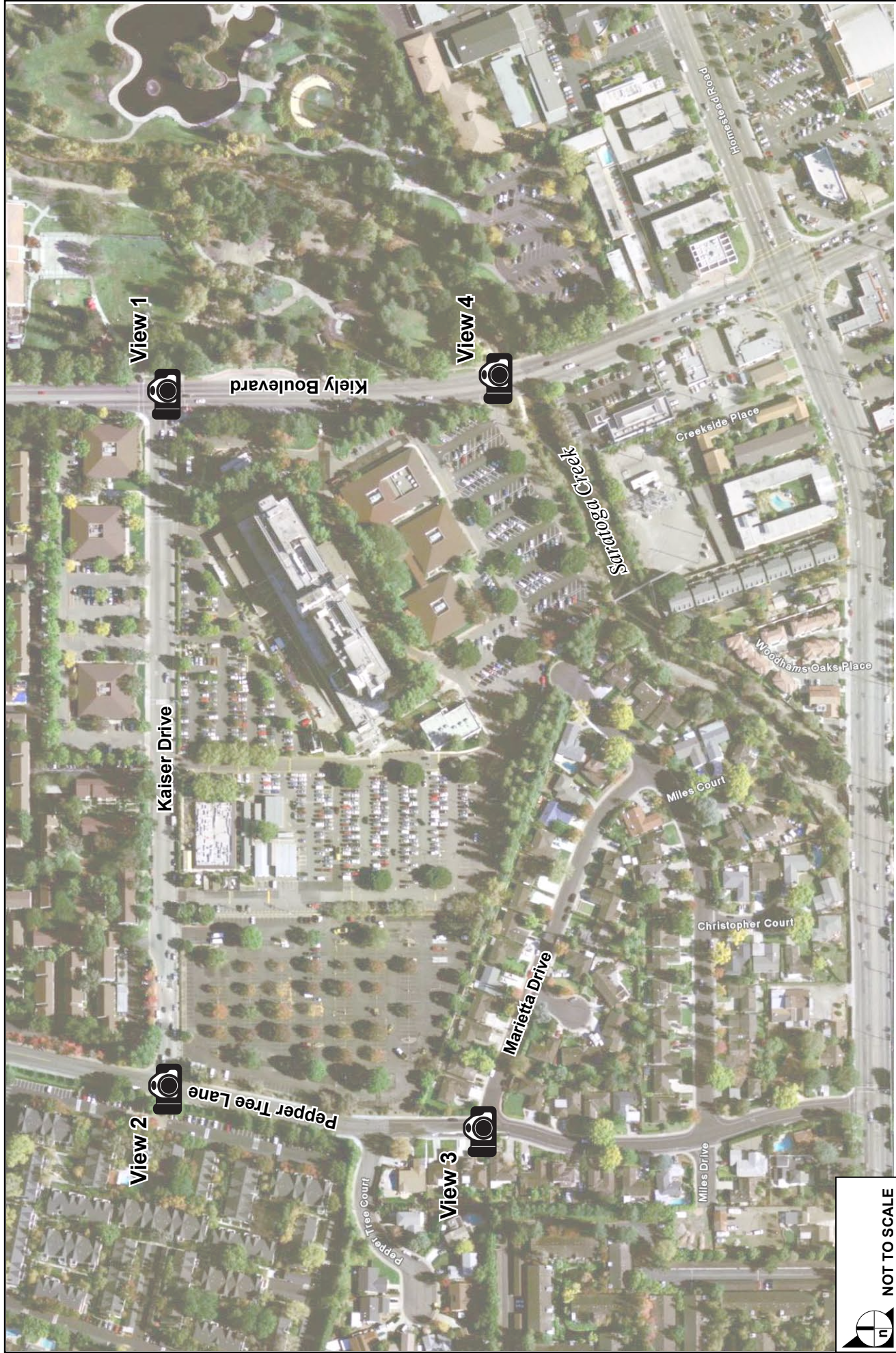
As shown in the existing conditions photograph in **Figure 4.1-3, View 2: Existing Conditions**, the viewpoint is taken from Pepper Tree Lane, looking east along Kaiser Drive. The most prominent features of the project site include mature trees and ornamental vegetation in the foreground. The perimeter chain-link fence is visible in the midground of the viewpoint, along Kaiser Drive. The top of the hospital building is present in the background, as well as telephone poles on the project site. Mature trees line Kaiser Drive, east toward Kiely Boulevard, are also present in the background of this viewpoint.

Existing View: Viewpoint 3

As shown in **Figure 4.1-4, View 3: Existing Conditions**, the viewpoint is taken from Pepper Tree Lane at Marietta Drive, looking north up Pepper Tree Lane. The most prominent feature on the project site is the mature vegetation in the foreground, as well as the roof of a single-family home south of the project site. The perimeter chain-link fence on the project site is slightly visible in the midground of the viewpoint along Pepper Tree Lane. The parking lot on the project site is not visible due to the mature vegetation that dominates the foreground and midground of this viewpoint.

Existing View: Viewpoint 4

As shown in the existing conditions photograph in **Figure 4.1-5, View 4: Existing Conditions**, the viewpoint is taken from Central Park, looking north on Kiely Boulevard. The mature vegetation in the foreground consists mainly of evergreen trees. The perimeter chain-link fence is also visible in the foreground of this viewpoint. The mature vegetation shields the main hospital building from this viewpoint. The single-story office building nearest to Kiely Boulevard is visible in the background. It consists of a white painted exterior and a beige slanted roof.

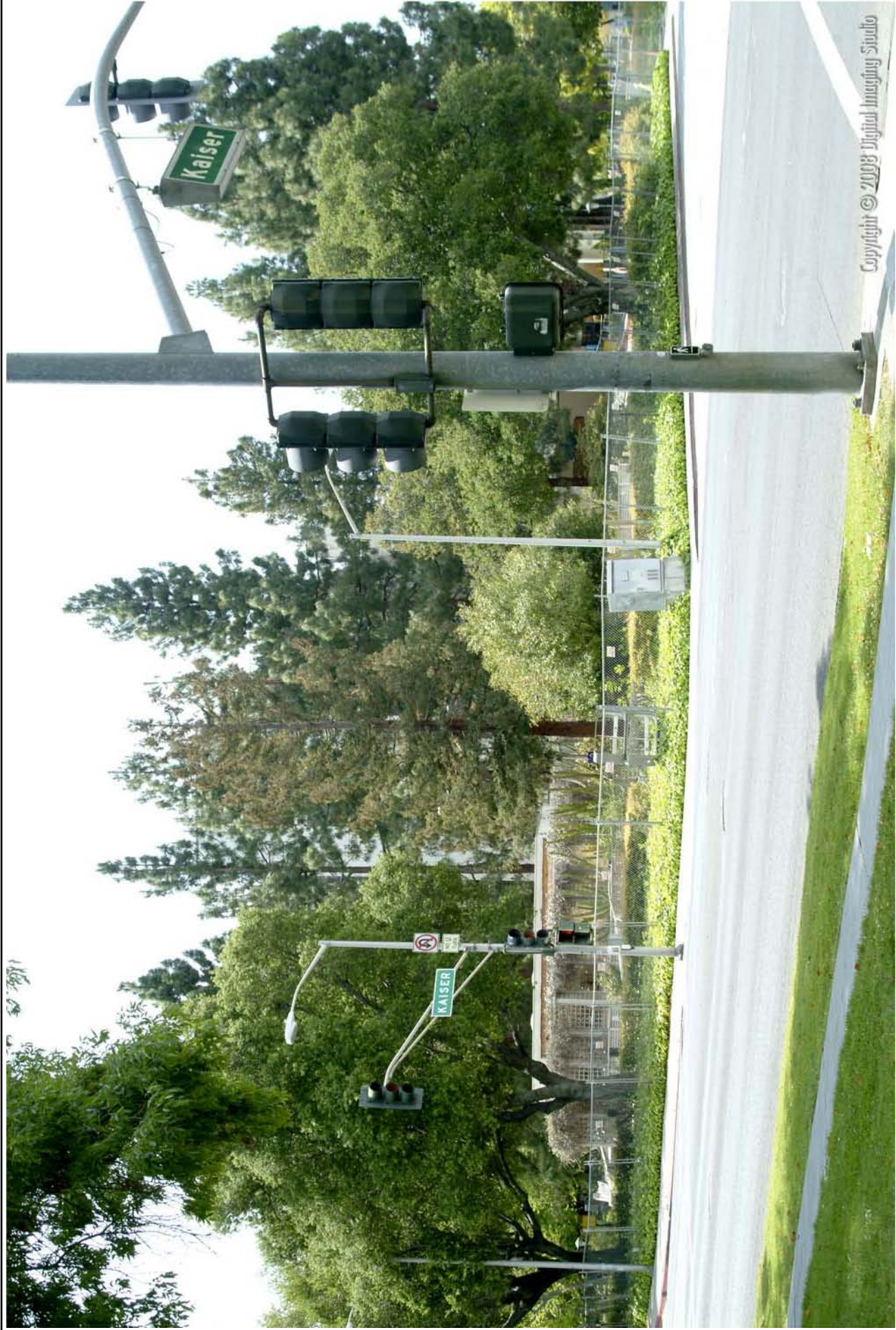


NOT TO SCALE

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2007, Impact Sciences, Inc. - May 2008

FIGURE 4.1-1

Key to Viewpoint Locations



SOURCE: Digital Imaging Studio - April 2008

FIGURE 4.1-2

View 1: Existing Conditions





SOURCE: Digital Imaging Studio - April 2008

FIGURE 4.1-3

View 2: Existing Conditions





SOURCE: Digital Imaging Studio - April 2008

FIGURE 4.1-4

View 3: Existing Conditions





SOURCE: Digital Imaging Studio - April 2008

FIGURE 4.1-5

View 4: Existing Conditions

